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they only eat pumpkin leaves', i.e. where game is short and the people have to rely on vegetable relishes. They refer to a visit to a village on a big river as, 'He has gone to eat fish with So-and-So.' The fortunes of each district are discussed year by year and villages described as 'with hunger' (*pa nsala*) or the converse, 'with beer' (*pa bwalua*), i.e. with so much grain that they can make beer frequently. The seasonal changes in food, and the stages in its production, give their names to the periods of the year. While a definite calendar of moons exists (cf. Chap. XVIII) the Bemba more often time events as having taken place 'in the hunger months', i.e. the last months of the rains when the millet supply is low; or 'when we were eating mushrooms', 'when the *mupundu* fruit was ripe', and 'when we were reaping, sowing', &c., and the ages of babies are usually reckoned by dating their births in this manner.

The position of the Bemba traveller, dependent as he is on the hazards of hospitality, provides a further element of uncertainty. The correct greeting to one who has returned from a journey is *Mwalyeni bwino*, 'Have you eaten well?' To which the courteous reply is *Kulila mulelya*, 'Provided you have eaten well yourself', or *E Mukwai kufipwishya*, 'Yes, sir, I eat everything up completely', or else *Fia kwa cilime bafipwa kano wa kulapo panda*, 'It would have been impossible to finish up all the crops unless you had built a house alongside', i.e. it was so plentiful. There is a regular form of magic used to ensure a guest's arrival before a meal has been finished and not after. A knot tied in the grass with the right formula repeated will secure this result, and I found my staff even performed this rite on my own behalf if at all doubtful as to my reception on a visit to unknown English hosts.

Besides this direct interest in the food he is going to eat in the day, or the beer he may have the luck to come in time for, the secondary values acquired by food give it an added emotional interest to the Bemba. It must be remembered that there is no other way of accumulating wealth in this area except by acquiring sufficient food to feed many followers. The giving or receipt of food is a part of most economic transactions, and may come to represent a number of human relationships whether between different kinsmen or between subject and chief. For this reason the whole question of handling or dividing food acquires tremendous emotional significance for the native, and discussions of personalities or legal relationships tend to be ultimately expressed in this

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idiom. To speak of a chief is to mention before the end of the conversation his reputation for generosity or meanness in the giving of porridge and beer. To describe an attitude to any particular kinsman leads almost invariably to a comment, for instance, on the food in his granary, the number of relatives he supports, the share of meat he has asked for, or the amount of beer he contributed at the marriage of his daughter or the visit of an elder. In daily life the women, whether at work in the kitchen or sitting gossiping on their verandas at night, exchange interminable criticisms as to the way in which some particular dish of food has been divided, or the distribution of the four or five gourds of beer made at a brew. These casual observations of native life are significant. For us it requires a real effort of imagination to visualize a state of society in which food matters so much and from so many points of view, but this effort is necessary if we are to understand the emotional background of Bemba ideas as to diet.

The Perfect Meal.

To the Bemba each meal, to be satisfactory, must be composed of two constituents: a thick porridge (*ubwali*) made of millet and the relish (*umunani*) of vegetables, meat, or fish, which is eaten with it.

(*a*) *Ubwali*. *Ubwali* is made from coarse-ground flour[1] poured into boiling water, stirred until the mixture is stiff, and then kneaded and patted with a strong wooden blade—the Bemba spoon (*miko*)—and served in the open eating-baskets which the natives call *icipe* (plur. *ifipe*) in warm brown lumps that are round in shape. There is no comparable English dish. *Ubwali* is commonly translated by 'porridge' but this is misleading. The hot water and meal are mixed in proportion of 3 to 2 to make *ubwali* and this produces a solid mass of the consistency of plasticine and quite unlike what we know as porridge.[2] *Ubwali* is eaten in hunks torn off in the hand, rolled into balls, dipped in relish, and bolted whole.

Millet has already been described as the main constituent of Bemba diet, but it is difficult for the European, accustomed as he is to a large variety of foodstuffs, to realize fully what a 'staple crop' can mean to a primitive people. To the Bemba, millet porridge is

[1] Usually finger-millet, but *ubwali* may also be made with Kaffir-corn or cassava flour.

[2] The exact proportions in one sample (examined by Mrs. Gore-Browne) were—water 62 per cent. to flour 38 per cent. The word 'porridge' seems, however, preferable to 'mush' used in some Bantu grammars.

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cried light-heartedly, hitting her stomach, 'I have been turned into a young girl, my heart is so light.'[1]

In an hour or so men and women gathered on the village square and burst into spontaneous dancing of a type I had never seen in ordinary life. Young men charged arm in arm up and down in lines singing Bemba and European songs. They imitated mission drilling and play-acting. Young girls played singing games amid screams of laughter. Drums beat, and the older women and babies clapped and shouted. It was like some wild Dionysiac rabble, and indeed these people might have been taken for drunkards, except that they were better tempered, more energetic, and showed more initiative in inventing new games. The next day, they went to work early, declaring that their arms were strong. The excitement on this particular occasion was admittedly unusual, but I have described it as an example of the extreme delight of the Bemba in the sight of meat, and of meat in such profusion that it could be used for once in an utterly reckless way.

(*d*) *Other cravings.* Old men who have become accustomed to drinking beer say that they feel their stomachs asking for beer. Elderly people also long for snuff and will go to any lengths to get even a small pinch. *Kuba no mupatikishya ku fwaka* means 'to be in a state of begging for snuff', but I do not know if this craving has any correlation with dietetic deficiencies. Pregnant women are expected to be liable to pika[2] hungers and are said to 'ask their husbands suddenly to get them such and such'. They regularly pull lumps of clay from the walls of their huts to chew, and declare their mothers taught them this custom. I have heard that some children also eat clay, but I never saw this done.

(*e*) *Monotony and diet cravings.* Most Bemba seem to be specially liable to sudden cravings for different foods during the season of shortage. Whether this is due to definitely physiological reactions or to the excessive monotony of the diet at this season I do not know. To the European Bemba meals seem insipid and tedious at all seasons of the year. The foods available are not numerous, and even then they cannot all be used at any one time (cf. Chart on p. 41). There are a number of variations in the methods of cooking known, but, as in England, many of these require too much time for their preparation as a general rule. In one village

[1] *Nasanguka naba mukashyana ico mutima uayanguka.*

1 [The division and eating of the meat from a large antelope shot by the author. - Analyst]
2 [Erratum, should be "pica", = craving for unnatural foods. - A.]

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241 417 work for a man, and it is extremely hard labour. Stout poles of about five feet high and five inches in diameter are trimmed to a point and sunk in the earth about six feet apart. The intervening spaces are filled with horizontal logs, threaded between the uprights, supported on forks, or tied with bark. The result is a fairly impenetrable wall which can only be entered through a rough gate. But even at this cost of labour a fence is not reckoned to last more than two years. The timber rots with rain and is eaten by white ants. Another difficulty is the fact that only a man can make an *ulubao*. Deserted wives try nowadays to set up a makeshift fence, with one cross-bar between flimsy uprights and leafy branches laid aslant it, but it is inefficient and will only last a month. It is one of the grievances of women whose menfolk are absent that they can rarely find a male relative to build them a fence, even if they have been successful in persuading one to cut them a garden. It is a trouble which is, of course, limited to areas where game is plentiful, but in these the women are sometimes reduced to desperation by constant raids on their millet harvest. Near Kasama I watched from a distance a [152] woman running down a hill-side and up the slope opposite to her village, wailing in short staccato cries as she ran. It was like the lamentation at a funeral ceremony, and people stood aside to watch her as she passed. They explained as an apology for such an unusual display of emotion: 'That is a single woman (*umushimbe*). She is alone. The pigs came to her garden last week, and then the other night, and now to-day. And so her heart has become heavy. She has no more food.' Such conduct contrasts sharply with the usual native stoicism in the face of disaster, but it gives some idea of the pitch of despair to which widowed or deserted women are sometimes brought at the present time, for want of male help in economic tasks.

In other parts of the country the people dig pits with mounds between them round the edge of their *ubukula* instead of making a fence. They laugh and say the pits will not keep the pigs off always, but that they are quick to make. They say the animals are puzzled by the holes and begin to run to and fro and to say, '*Yangwe!* I can't get out!' and so they get discouraged and go away. The Lala system of enclosing a number of small gardens within one fence to save labour (*ukuanse lala*) I only heard of once in the Bemba country at Mungalaba, near Mpika.[1]

[1] Information sent me by Mrs. Gore-Browne.